

Frequently Asked Questions  
about  
**Michigan's Priority Schools**

**General Questions**

**What is a Priority school?**

Priority schools are those schools in the bottom 5% of a complete “top-to-bottom” list of schools that are now published every August. This placement is often indicative of minimal student outcomes in a number of subject areas over time, poor achievement coupled with dramatic declines in student performance or substantial achievement gaps, or all of these factors. As a result, Priority school districts need to develop a reform/redesign plan for the school that focuses on rapid turnaround as a way to dramatically improve student achievement.

**How does this vary from a PLA (Persistently Low Achieving) school?**

“Priority schools” replaces the previous designation of Persistently Low Achieving, based on the ESEA Flexibility Request. This new designation applies to the same group – the bottom 5% of schools in the state. However, the PLA list required a complex set of tiers and pools of schools to draw from, whereas the Priority school designation is based on the Top-to-Bottom listing of schools.

**What does it mean to be a Priority school?**

Priority schools are required to develop and implement a reform/redesign plan based on one of four intervention models, as a means for rapid turnaround in student achievement. These schools are given a number of supports to result in such a turnaround, and are placed under the supervision of Michigan's School Reform/Redesign Officer to affect such results. Priority schools are also required to utilize set-aside Title I funds, if they are a Title I school, to support the implementation of this plan and provide quality offerings to students.

**Why do we have a Priority school list? Is it required by legislation?**

MCL 380.1280.c requires that the Superintendent of Public Instruction publish a list of the lowest achieving 5% of all public schools in the state, and that these schools be placed under the supervision of the State School reform/Redesign Officer. Further, the ESEA Flexibility Request outlines federal requirements for these schools, and details a system of support intended to help these schools improve outcomes for students. Both of these documents also outline the timeline and governance considerations for schools that do not effectively implement their reform plans in a way that results in dramatic improvements in student performance.

**Can a district have both Priority and Focus schools?**

Yes, if individual schools are facing different kinds of improvement tasks. See the Supports and Requirements sections for specifics, and plan to treat each school according to its designation.

### **How many Priority schools are there? What do we know about them?**

In 2012, 146 schools were identified as Priority schools based on the Top-to-Bottom List. In addition, 92 schools were identified as PLA schools in 2010, and 98 schools were identified as such in 2011. 36 of these schools have been identified on this list for the past three years.

Unlike the PLA schools of past years, where the metrics tended toward identification of high schools, the 146 Priority schools identified in 2012 range in grade level as follows:

- 46 elementary schools
- 11 middle schools
- 35 high schools
- 37 Elementary-middle schools (typically K-7 or K-8 buildings)
- 5 Middle-high schools (typically grades 7-12)
- 9 K-12 schools
- 3 Academic Centers

## **Identification of Priority Schools**

### **How were Priority schools identified?**

Based on Michigan's ESEA Flexibility Request, a school may be identified as a Priority school for the following reasons:

1. A school is among the bottom 5% of the Top-to-Bottom list. The official metric requires that Michigan include the bottom 5% of Title I schools. If the bottom 5% overall does not include 5% of the state's Title I schools (i.e. there are too few Title I schools in that group), the cutoff is set within the Top-to-Bottom list to a level that includes 5% of the total Title I schools.
2. A school was a SIG (School Improvement Grant) recipient in 2010 or 2011.
3. A school was identified as a PLA school in 2010 or 2011 (i.e. all previous PLA schools are classified as Priority schools while they are developing or implementing a reform plan per their original placement on the PLA list. Schools stay in this category for four years.

### **What are the components of the Top-to-Bottom ranking that identify Priority schools?**

The calculation methodology is explained in detail in documents on the website for MDE's Bureau of Assessment and Accountability (BAA). In summary, the Top-to-Bottom uses achievement scores (scale scores, not proficiency rates); growth or improvement scores based on two-year growth for students in grades 3-8, and four-year analysis of scores at the high school level; and achievement gaps, based on the composite variation of individual students in each subject. Five subject areas are rated using these factors (math, reading, writing, science, and social studies), and these are averaged together to determine an overall standardized score for a school. For high schools, graduation rate is also factored into the overall score along with these subject areas.

### **How is this different than the PLA list in previous years?**

The metric components for the PLA list varied in that they identified "tiers" and "pools" of schools based on Title I status, level of school, and other factors to determine the rank order of schools. This system made it harder to identify schools based purely on factors of achievement or proficiency, growth or decline, and achievement gaps. It also focused on two content categories: math and reading.

### **I want to see the data that took my Priority school through those steps.**

A “lookup tool” is available at <http://mi.gov/ttb>. This downloadable Excel worksheet allows you to enter the name of a school, enter its school code and see the results of each of the steps above.

A worksheet is available at <http://mi.gov/prioritieschools/> that will lead you through the diagnostic steps that use these relative rankings to see where the school is doing better and worse than other schools at:

- **achievement** in each of the five tested areas (math, reading, writing, science and social studies)
- **improvement** in each of the tested areas, and
- **achievement gap** in each tested area. [This will be the area in which Focus Schools are well below the state average]

For questions that remain, please contact the Bureau of Assessment and Accountability help desk for individual help in walking through calculations. ~~517/xxx-xxx-xxx~~. You can reach this office via email at [mde-accountability@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-accountability@michigan.gov), or via phone at 877-560-8378, [select option 6 \(toll free\) or 517-373-8393](#).

### **How does the recent change in cut scores affect the Priority school calculation?**

Because the calculations for achievement are based on scale scores (which compare a student/school’s performance to the state average) rather than percent proficient (which counts performance above a particular point – the “cut score”), the cut score is not used in the calculation for student achievement. The determination of the improvement score is, however, weighted for each student in the school based on changes in proficiency level from year to year. ~~However, it~~ In order to fairly utilize this metric, the weighting applies the new cut scores to scale scores for previous years, so the change is relative, and effectively has little impact on this metric ~~either~~.

### **What years’ scores were used as the basis for ~~this calculation~~ student achievement in the Top-to-Bottom list?**

For elementary and middle schools (who test in the fall) this year’s Top-to-Bottom list is based on averaging data from the last available school years: SY 2009-10 (tested Fall 2010) and SY 2010-11 (tested Fall 2011). For high schools (who test in the spring) this year’s list uses data from SY 2011-2 (tested Spring 2012) and SY 2010-11 (tested Spring 2011).

### **Are all schools included in the list?**

Any school that has as least 30 Full Academic Year (FAY) students in each of the last two years in at least two tested content areas is ranked if it is open at the time the list is generated.

### **What if a school has been reconfigured?**

If a school has changed 4 or more grade-levels, it receives a new code and the Top-to-Bottom rating stays with the old school code; if three or less grade-levels have changed, the ranking belongs to the school even if it now has a different grade configuration.

**Are all students included in the school's calculations?**

A student's scores are "pointed" toward the school where his/her learning took place during the year in question. For instance, sixth graders who tested in a middle school in Fall 2011 but attended fifth grade at an elementary during 2010-11 would have their scores count for the elementary school for the Fall 2011 test results.

Students are included for accountability purposes in a school's data only if they were Full Academic Year (FAY) students – present during 3 count days – during the year in question.

**How do students with specialized learning needs factor into the calculations? Is a school with a greater number of these students impacted in any way?**

No, the number of students who are identified with special learning needs and, as a result, use the ASSIST-alternate assessments, does not impact a school. Students using different categories of assessments are compared with each other, so that there is an "apples to apples" type of comparison for metrics in determining achievement gaps. Again, more information regarding these assessment instruments and how they factor into the Top-to-Bottom ranking are available online from the Bureau of Assessment and Accountability web page.

**Our school has always made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Why are we suddenly identified as a Priority school?**

The methodology for the AYP calculation made separate determinations for a number of identified subgroups. Even if a subgroup's average was high enough to make AYP, it could still contain a number of low-performing students. Across the nine subgroups, those low-performing students aggregate to a significant number, but they were never examined as a whole because they were separated for analysis. The new methodology for addressing achievement gaps with the Top-to-Bottom ranking used to identify Priority schools treats all low-performing students as a single "super-subgroup" regardless of their demographic composition; it has identified a number of schools who share the common problem of how to close large gaps in performance, but who have never been identified as needing support before.

**Requirements for Priority Schools****What are the consequences of being identified as a Priority school?**

The consequences of being identified are deliberately formative and supportive rather than punitive; this is because Michigan's waiver request builds its alternate accountability system on four premises:

- All means all; students are innate learners and all can be helped to learn
- Michigan learners must be College and Career Ready
- Our teachers and administrators are equal to the task
- Careful diagnosis, professional dialogue and differentiated support for struggling schools will make the needed difference

Our resulting theory of action is that careful diagnosis (consisting of data coupled with professional dialogue) will lead to customized interventions that support adult learning about (and use of) new ways of teaching and learning that will increase student achievement among our lowest performing students.

During the first year in which one or more of its schools is identified as a Priority school, a district is required to work with the school to develop a reform/redesign plan for the school,

with a goal of rapid turnaround in student outcomes and achievement. The reform plan is based on the premise that changes in school policies and practices based on research and data analysis can affect the actions and practices of all stakeholders in the school, and can refocus instruction in a way that improves student learning and achievement. During the plan development process, a school engages in a facilitated, diagnostic “data dialogue” to identify major changes in teaching and learning practice capable of moving achievement levels among the lowest-performing students, and changes in school or district policies that affect the climate and culture of a school.

During the following three school years, the Priority school is required to implement its reform plan in a way that results in rapid turnaround of student achievement. Schools are monitored during this period for implementation of the plan, and provided technical assistance and other supports during this time to support the various components of the plan.

### **What are the school improvement models that a Priority school can select for the reform plan?**

Schools can select from one of the four following Intervention models identified by the U.S. Department of Education. These are specifically mentioned in legislation.

1. **Transformation Model** – Districts would address four specific areas:
  - a. Developing teacher and school leader effectiveness, which includes replacing the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformational model;
  - b. Implementing comprehensive instructional reform strategies;
  - c. Extending learning and teacher planning time and creating community-oriented schools; and
  - d. Providing operational flexibility and sustained support.
2. **Turnaround Model** – This would address similar issues to those mentioned above in the transformation model, and include other actions such as:
  - a. Replacing the principal and at least 50 percent of the school’s staff;
  - b. Adopting a new governance structure; and
  - c. Implementing a new or revised instructional program.
3. **Restart Model** – Districts would close the school and reopen it under the management of a charter school operator, charter management organization, or educational management organization selected through a rigorous review process. A restart school would be required to enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend.
4. **Close / Consolidate Model** – Districts would close the low-achieving school and enroll the students who attended that school in other high-achieving schools in the district.

More information about the models can be found on the School Reform Office website.

### **How does our school go about selecting a model?**

Schools and districts should dedicate an early period of the reform planning process to gathering and reviewing data to weigh against the various models. In addition to reading resources on the four models, as provided on the School Reform Office web site, Priority school district personnel should attend the September 12 Technical Assistance meeting, which will address these models and their requirements in detail.

**Another school in our district had to create a reform plan last year. Can we just use their reform plan?**

No. While some components of the reform plan may be similar, especially if practices can be implemented district-wide, such as teacher and leader evaluation practices, other aspects of the plan should be uniquely developed for the school based on data and practices observed in that school. The leadership, professional learning needs, school and classroom policies, and learning environment of any school are a unique reflection of the people and context of the school. As such, the reform plan should be tailored to those needs based on a range of data specific to the school.

**How is the School Improvement Plan similar or different to the reform plan?**

Both plans are long term plans to address aspects of instruction, learning, and school culture and climate, as well as operational and systems issues for the school and district. However, the reform plan and its requirements take precedence for Priority schools, and this plan takes the place of the School Improvement Plan for the school during the period in which the schools is being supervised by the School Reform Officer.

**Do Priority schools have to address all of the requirements of the model?**

Yes. The requirements within each model must all be addressed in the reform plan. The timeline for addressing these requirements should be appropriate to lead to rapid turnaround, but do not require every aspect of the plan to be implemented at the same time.

**What are the “implementation indicators”?**

Each requirement of the reform plan models has a set of associated implementation indicators, which a school will select each year during the plan development or review process. These indicators are outcomes-based statements derived from the intervention model requirements that would illustrate effective implementation of the plan, no matter what details the school and district choose to include in their plan. These are also used to systematically review progress in implementation by the School Reform Office.

**Both the Transformation and Turnaround models call for the replacement of the principal. What are the criteria for replacing the principal?**

The principal must be replaced in the Turnaround and Transformation models. There is a two-year rule that stipulates if a principal has been replaced within the last two full years (going back to the school year 2009/2010), and documentation is required for the Turnaround model.

**Questions about the Models and Requirements**

**Can we choose which model we wish to use?**

Yes. However, the model should be appropriate to your school’s needs. More information about selecting a reform model, including a decision tool from the Center for Improvement and Innovation, can be found at the School Reform Office website at <http://mi.gov/mde-reform>.

**Both the turnaround and transformation models require the replacement of the principal. What are the criteria for replacing the principal?**

The principal must be replaced in the Turnaround and Transformation models. There is a two-year rule that stipulates if a principal has been replaced within the last two full years (going back to the school year 2009/2010), and documentation is required for the Turnaround model.

**What is the definition of increased learning time? Does this include before and after-school time?**

Increased learning time” means using a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours to include additional time for (a) instruction in core academic subjects including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography; (b) instruction in other subjects and enrichment activities that contribute to a well-rounded education, including, for example, physical education, service learning, and experiential and work-based learning opportunities that are provided by partnering, as appropriate, with other organizations; and (c) teachers to collaborate, plan, and engage in professional development within and across grades and subjects.

Research supports the effectiveness of well-designed programs that expand learning time by a minimum of 300 hours per school year. (See Frazier, Julie A.; Morrison, Frederick J. “The Influence of Extended-year Schooling on Growth of Achievement and Perceived Competence in Early Elementary School.” *Child Development*. Vol. 69 (2), April 1998, pp.495-497 and research done by Mass2020.) Extending learning into before- and after- school hours can be difficult to implement effectively, but is permissible under this definition, although the Department (USED) encourages LEAs to closely integrate and coordinate academic work between in school and out of school. To satisfy the requirements in Section I.A.2(a)(1)(viii) of the turnaround model and Section I.A.2(d)(3)(i)(A) of the transformation model for providing increased learning time, a before- or after-school instructional program must be available to all students in the school. Addendum: Although research supports the effectiveness of increasing learning time by a minimum of 300 hours, the final requirements do not require that an LEA implementing either the turnaround model or the transformation model necessarily provide at least 300 hours of increased learning time. An LEA has the flexibility to determine precisely how to meet the requirement to establish schedules that provide increased learning time, and should do so with an eye toward the goal of increasing learning time enough to have a meaningful impact on the academic program in which the model is being implemented.

**Does the selection of one of the models void the union contract?**

No. It is recognized that negotiations may be required to implement all or portions of a given model. Recent legislation passed in Michigan June 2011 has eliminated from collective bargaining the following topics: 1) policies governing teacher placement or impact of personnel decisions; 2) an employer’s performance evaluation system; decision about a policy for discharging or disciplining employees subject to the tenure law, and the discharge or discipline of an employee; 3) classroom observation decisions; 4) a performance-based method of compensation; and 5) decisions about parental notification of ineffective teachers. (For further discussion of this topic, please see question F-7 of the Federal SIG Grant Frequently Asked Questions document at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/faq.html>.)

## Timelines for Planning and Implementation

### **When does the school have to submit the reform plan?**

Schools must submit the reform plan within 90 days of being placed under the supervision of the School Reform Officer by the Superintendent for Public Instruction. For 2012 Priority schools, the reform plan must be submitted by November 29, 2012.

If a reform plan is not approved, the school has an additional 30 days from the notice of the disapproval to revise and resubmit the plan.

### **Can a school revise its plan? If so, how long does a school have to revise its plan?**

There are two ways a school may revise their plan. If the plan is not approved after the initial review, schools will have 30 days from the date of announcement of the disapproval from MDE to revise the plan. Schools in this situation will have until January 27, 2013 to submit their revised plan.

Once a plan is approved, a school can request a change in the plan at any point during the implementation of the plan. However, schools cannot waive any of the reform requirements. Any modifications to the plan need to be based upon a changed context or situation, and will need to work with the School Reform Office to come to consensus on the revisions, along with any changed implementation indicators, goals, or expectations.

The School Reform Office may also request a change in the plan if a plan component cannot effectively be implemented by the school, or if the implementation of the plan is not leading to the desired outcome in a reasonable timeframe.

### **How long is a school supervised by the School Reform Officer?**

The School Reform Officer supervises the development and implementation of the reform plan for up to four years (and possibly for an additional year if a dramatic change in context takes place at the school). The School Reform Officer does not oversee day-to-day operations, but does provide guidance and require implementation of the reform plan per the initial submission and to address the reform model requirements. If the School Reform Officer notes substantial progress and multiple years of improved student achievement, including no longer being among the bottom 5% of the Top-to-Bottom list, the SRO may elect to monitor progress less frequently for the remainder of the reform plan implementation.

## Supports for Priority Schools

### **What supports are available for Priority schools?**

Priority schools receive a wide variety of supports to assist with the development and implementation of the reform plan. The range of services and supports varies depending on the Title I status of the school, and the number of years the school is identified as a Priority school.

All Priority schools must develop a reform plan in accordance with MCL 380.1280.c and the provisions of the ESEA Flexibility Request. Schools receive support in the development of this plan through technical assistance provisions of the School Reform Office (SRO). These include meetings, webinars, and access to technical information and SRO staff to provide specific guidance and feedback in the development of the plan. This support addresses both the specific



requirement components as well as support for the quality of the plan and the ability to effectively implement the plan to turnaround student achievement.

In addition, Priority schools receive a number of additional supports free of cost during plan development and implementation over a four-year period, including the following:

- Access to online professional learning resources specific to school turnaround and improvement,
- Participation in technical assistance professional learning events and conferences, including networking meetings, leadership academies, and targeted resources,
- Access to the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum for all core teachers in the school,
- Participation in the Superintendent's Dropout Challenge,
- Access to data tools and supports to analyze progress,
- Access to district resources such as the District Toolkit and Educational Resource Survey

Title I eligible Priority schools are also able to receive additional supports, including:

- An Intervention Specialist from Michigan State University, who can facilitate various aspects of plan development, as well as provide technical assistance using customized data tools provided to the school,
- Access to the Statewide System of Support, which includes supports from MDE and ISDs, including School Improvement Facilitators, to help guide instructional and school-wide components of the reform plan,
- Data packets on school achievement outcomes, demographics, and other data resources to support the school in consideration of the various reform efforts,
- Access to Title I specific events such as networking meetings, the School Improvement Conference, and other supports.

#### **Who is the intervention specialist, and what does this person do for a Priority school?**

Priority schools that are eligible for Title I funds may choose to receive the support of an Intervention Specialist. This individual is provided to the school and district free of charge through a collaborative effort between the Michigan Department of Education and Michigan State University (MSU). The Intervention Specialist is trained and supervised by MSU to provide technical assistance to Priority schools and districts. After a school is identified as a Priority school, the Intervention Specialist is assigned to the school to facilitate a "data dialogue" to explore the strengths and needs of the priority school, and to use this process to assist the school in the development of the reform plan.

Following the approval of the reform plan, the Intervention Specialist continues working with the Priority school during the implementation of the plan, continuing to provide technical assistance and support regarding the implementation of the plan. The Intervention Specialist also acts as a coordinator and liaison with the school and district, as well as other organizational entities, such as MDE and the local ISD. The Intervention Specialist will also work with the school to document the implementation of the plan, providing evidence that is required for review of the school's efforts by the School Reform Office.

## Exit Criteria

### **If a school is no longer in the bottom 5% of the Top-to-Bottom list, does it get “released” from implementing the reform plan?**

No. The placement in the bottom 5% of the Top-to-Bottom list is only used to identify new Priority schools each year. Once identified at first, a school is required to develop the reform plan in the first year, and implement that plan for the next three years, regardless of status. However, if a school is off the bottom 5% for two years in a row, the school is considered a “probationary” Priority school, and only needs to be monitored for implementation on a quarterly basis (with regard to plan implementation). At this time, a priority school is only released from plan implementation and SRO oversight after three years of effective implementation.

### **Priority schools are required to demonstrate growth and improvement. How will these be determined and measured?**

Priority school improvement is measured in both reform plan implementation and related leading indicators of rapid school turnaround. The determination of such growth, as well as the decisions regarding school oversight related to this growth, vary as a school progresses through the reform plan process, as listed below:

- Year 1 (planning) – Because of the nature of the planning focus and possible timeline for testing in schools, no growth indicators are applied during this year. However, schools use this time to gather metrics for baseline levels for leading indicators and other relevant data to be used in plan implementation. Improvement in achievement is helpful, but not required.
- Year 2 (implementation) – Schools identify target values for ten leading indicators (instructional time, participation in standardized assessment, dropout rate, course completion / retention, student attendance, number and percent of students completing advanced courses, discipline incidents, truancy rate, distribution of teachers by performance level, and teacher attendance) that are measured by the school over the course of the year to determine progress. In addition, schools identify a number of specific outcome-indicators for the reform requirements that align specifically to their reform plan. Evidence of these is gathered by both school personnel and SRO monitors, as well as through any other documentation or information gathering efforts of intervention specialists or ISD school improvement facilitators that are working with the school on reform efforts. These are used to identify progress in implementation on the reform plan. These are combined and weighted (20% for leading indicators and 80% for implementation indicators) to determine overall progress. A color-indicator system is used to represent progress during two, semi-annual reviews.
- Year 3 (implementation) – Similar to above, schools will update target values for leading indicators and identify appropriate implementation indicators for this year, which are monitored as identified above. However, implementation is weighted as only 55% of the overall progress indicator, with the remaining 25% being applied to lagging indicators and student achievement outcomes. In addition, an overall improvement in student achievement in all subjects needs to be met toward moving the school to the statewide 85% proficiency target in 2022. If these are not progressing at this level, schools may achieve “safe harbor” for this metric.

- Year 4 (implementation) – Same as year 3, however, a final decision regarding oversight will take place after student achievement scores are available at the end of the school year. Schools making satisfactory progress on implementation, and making necessary progress toward 85% proficiency in 2022 will be released to their local district to continue reform and improvement efforts without oversight of the SRO. Those not making adequate progress will be removed from the local district for placement with the statewide district.

#### **What happens if a school is not released to the local school district during or after the plan implementation?**

MCL 380.1280.c provides for extended control of a school that is not making sufficient improvement through the implementation of the reform plan. Such schools may be transferred to the State School Reform/Redesign District during or at the end of the implementation period for the school's reform plan. The Education Achievement Authority currently manages this oversight process, and is currently working with Detroit Public Schools to implement the first transition of schools from local oversight to the EAA's management. Though the School Reform Office has not yet placed any schools in this situation, the school code legislation allows for such a situation, which would likely result in dramatic change of oversight, and removal of the school from the local district for a period of at least five years, during which the reform model is selected for the school.

### **Funding Considerations**

#### **Are Priority schools eligible for School Improvement Grants?**

No. All Federal school improvement funds received by Michigan have been granted to schools.

#### **How does Priority school designation affect Title I funding for our school or district?**

Districts with schools that are identified as Priority schools are required to set aside 20 percent of their Title I funds to support the students in need within their Priority schools. These funds are initially designated for:

- Providing school of choice opportunities for students in the Priority school to attend other high quality schools in the region, including provision of transportation for students to attend such schools.
- Support increased learning time and/or supports for English Language Learners (ELL) and Students with Disabilities (SWD).

These set-asides are required at the outset of being identified as a Priority school. We recognize that less than 1% of the choice and transportation set-asides have typically been used by parents of students in these schools. As a result, districts are able to then use these funds to support other efforts related to the reform process, including:

- Support of increased learning time
- Implementation of rapid turnaround strategies to accelerate whole-building performance
- Professional learning aligned with needs
- District-level process improvement consultation

In addition to the district set-aside, a 10 percent building level set-aside is also required for Priority schools. This funding must be used to support one or more school-level interventions that are identified in the reform/redesign plan.

**When do we have to set aside funds for reform related efforts? How can a school change Title I funding plans if identified as a Priority school?**

After a school is identified as a Priority school (in August 2012 for new schools), the school needs to set aside funds at the local level to accommodate the set-aside requirements for the upcoming school year (and each subsequent year). The Office of Field Services will open access to the consolidated funding application through the grant management tools in early September, so that schools can make the necessary adjustments to the budget at that time.

It is encouraged that schools that are in the lowest 15% of the Top-to-Bottom list any given year address this set-aside within their consolidated application before it is submitted. Because of the set-aside nature, schools can then apply the funds elsewhere as needed if they are not identified as Priority schools when announced in the summer.

**How do the plans submitted for Title I relate to the reform/redesign plans?**

As mentioned above for set-asides, schools and districts should apply these Title I funds to efforts specified in the reform plans. Subsequent budgets should utilize Title I funding in appropriate ways that supports the implementation of the school's reform plan.

**How can we implement a plan without additional funding?**

While funding certainly helps with implementation of new programs, it is not essential to effectively implement the necessary reforms to improve teacher practice and student achievement in a school. A number of Michigan's PLA schools identified in 2010 were able to improve significantly despite receiving no additional support.

**My school has a SIG grant and is on the 2012 list. What part of the Priority School requirements and supports apply to us?**

Your SIG plan continues in effect for its full three years, and you should continue to work with MDE's SIG monitoring and oversight process. You will not be assigned additional Intervention Specialist support, unless you choose to purchase MI-Excel services with your SIG funds. If you receive Title I funds, you are required to set-aside annual percentages of both district and school-level allocations, to implement Choice/Transportation provisions and to choose from other allowable uses for the remainder of those set-aside funds.

**My school has a SIG grant but is NOT on the 2012 list. Priority School requirements and supports don't apply to us, right?**

Your SIG plan continues in effect for its full three years, and you should continue to work with MDE's SIG monitoring and oversight process. Once you became SIG-eligible, by being named to the Persistently Low Achieving list, your school fell under the oversight and supervision of the State Reform Office for the full four years provided in law. At the end of your 3 year SIG grant, The State Reform Office will continue to monitor progress in order to make an exit decision at the end of the four year period. Neither set-aside requirements nor MI-Excel support apply to you, unless you choose to purchase MI-Excel services with your SIG funds.

### Special Situation Issues and Questions

**Our school is not a Title I school, so does this apply to us?**

Yes. Title I considerations affect the support mechanisms for schools, but it does not affect the overall designation of a school as a Priority school, nor does it affect the reform plan requirements.

**Our school is in the process of being combined with another school or split into smaller schools. How does this affect our status?**

Schools in this situation are considered on an individual basis. From a metrics perspective, a school is not reclassified unless there are more than three grade levels transferring from one building to another. In this event, if the school is a Priority school, a letter and supplemental documentation of the change should be specifically provided to the School Reform Officer to note the change, so that considerations of this change can be reviewed and determined.

**Our school is being supervised by an Emergency Financial Manager. What does this mean for our Priority school?**

A change to MCL 380.1280c indicates that “if a school is included on the list under subsection (1) is operated by a school district in which an emergency manager is in place under the local government and school district fiscal accountability act, then the superintendent of public instruction shall not issue an order placing the school under the supervision of the state school reform/redesign officer.” At this time, this only applies to schools in Detroit, Muskegon Heights, and Highland Park that are designated as priority schools. The State Reform Officer will not be soliciting and approving plans for schools in these districts, though the schools may request that the SRO provide feedback on the reform plan.